



WINIAM FIELD-WREN (*Calamanthus winiam*).

Male at nest.

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Discovery of the Winiam Field-Wren (*Calamanthus Winiam*).*

By A. J. and A. G. CAMPBELL, Melbourne.

(See Coloured Plate.)

ON August 30, 1923, in the "Little Desert" (about 13 miles south of Nhill, or 250 miles north-west of Melbourne), when A. J. and A. G. Campbell and R. J. Oldfield were hunting for a variety of *Acanthiza hedleyi*, this new *Calamanthus* was discovered and a specimen procured.

It is usually unwise to describe a new species on a single specimen. Four years subsequently, however, there came an opportunity again to visit the home of this *Calamanthus*, when many birds were observed, and other specimens, including a nest and eggs, were obtained (by permission of the authorities). The additional material confirmed the species as new to ornithology.

The Little Desert probably runs unbroken to South Australia, about the Coorong. It is a wind-swept tract of low, undulatory sand-ridges clothed with rough vegetation, chiefly dwarf banksia and casuarina, and occasionally stunted eucalyptus near some ancient soak. The botanist will find numerous other kinds of hardy vegetation, not to mention tufts of spinifex and odd grass-trees, besides rarer flowering plants, which flourish in their sandy conditions, on an average annual rainfall of about sixteen inches.

The few other birds frequenting the locality are chiefly *Acanthiza hedleyi*, Tawny-crowned and Yellow-winged Honey-eaters, stray pairs of Hooded Robins, and in the season the Black-breasted Song-Lark, in addition to those the feathers of which were noted under the description of the nest.

* Described in *The Emu*, ante, pp. 80 and 221.

Reasons why this Field-Wren remained so long undiscovered may be its very local habitat and the great difficulty in procuring specimens. Its position is certainly unique when compared with other southern species.

ADDITIONAL NESTING NOTE.—A. G. Campbell mentions that the Dark Thornbill (*Acanthiza hedleyi*) in the sandy desert south of Nhill appears to live in company with this new-found Field-Wren. Hundreds of acres of this lonely moorland might be searched without revealing signs of either species, but where one was found the other was also present. He quotes a specific instance of this form of symbiosis:

"I was watching a pair of Dark Thornbills as they moved in a given direction in their usual elusive manner, when I distinctly saw one bird enter a fallen banksia bush. Immediately two birds flew out, one a Field-Wren, and this was how I discovered the first nest of *Calamanthus winiam*. It contained three small young with stomachs much distended, and a few black ants walking about them. Some minutes later I caught the mother bird on the nest and made a note of her colours and measurements before liberating her again. Her tail was turned at the tip with much sitting and her squeaking brought the two Thornbills back again. Her nest, nicely situated on the ground among dead banksia cones, was constructed almost entirely of dry, grass-like stems of *Calostrophus fastigiatus*, or rope-rush, and was warmly lined with a mat of feathers. Measurements were: Height, five inches; width, four inches; entrance, about one inch and three quarters in diameter." (Nest, which should be on ground, figured in plate.)

Bronze Cuckoo and Wrens.—A few mornings ago, while in the scrub near the beach, I saw a young Bronze Cuckoo being fed by a pair of Blue Wrens (*Malurus*). The Cuckoo was probably *C. basalis*, but I was unable to get a glimpse of the basal portion of the tail; the part of that appendage which showed was very distinctly marked with the Cuckoo stripes of brown and white. The bird's upper surface showed none of that lovely shining green tint so conspicuous in the adult, but appeared to be brown only. This young individual did not indulge in any querulous cries for food, but merely sat quietly on a low branch and took what was offered; neither did the foster-parents utter any sound—in fact, the party seemed under the influence of "a conspiracy of silence."
—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tas. (Feb. 1, 1928).